DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 249 CE 084 972

AUTHOR	Law, Bill
TITLE	How Do Careers Really Work?
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	25p.; Produced by Career-Learning Network.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.hihohiho.com/underpinning/caflaw.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Action Research; Adult Education; Career Change; *Career Development; Career Education; *Career Guidance; *Cultural Influences; Developed Nations; Developing Nations; Family Influence; Foreign Countries; *Occupational Aspiration; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; Self Concept; *Social Action
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; Chile; *Great Britain; India; Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper sets out career-related stories of people and their struggle to make sense of a life through work. They show that career management is not primarily a matching process but, for most, the making of a life the best way one can. The nine stories from five continents have these focuses: a feeling for a career; a career is other people or peer attachment; career and culture which frames belief about how things work and what is important; career over time; cultural capital or the processes of working out how things work begins in the toddler years; points of view on a career move; the inner life of a career; career as purpose knowing what to do to survive, escape, thrive, and flourish; and career learning as learning for action. The paper then argues the power of complexity, including that matching is not the first thing to do; deeper understanding is needed of what is going in the lives of people; and more ways are needed to get to grips with what is happening and what might be done to help. The paper concludes with this implication: among the many things needed to be done is local research for action, so one knows what to do, alongside people, in their communities. There are 28 references. (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 477 249

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Law

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

How do CAREERS really work?

Bill Law
National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling

The **Career-Learning NETWORK**
The Old Bakehouse
Elsworth, Cambridge CB3 8HX

© Career-Learning Network, 2002

CE 084 572

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Career management is about how people manage their working lives - how the well-connected use their contacts, how the movers and shakers get on, and how many of us hang in there - making a living the best way we can. It all raises questions about why women get women's work, why the poor get lousy jobs, and why too many get excluded from anything resembling a labour market.

Career management as matching

The easiest twentieth-century assumption to make about career management is that it is a matching process: people were thought of as having qualities and interests; jobs were thought of as having demands and rewards. So career management could be thought of as fitting a particular person to particular work. A good match was assumed to lead to an effective and rewarding career. It would then be good for everyone: workers, their families and communities and its citizens benefit; in a different way it is also good for their colleagues, their managers, their employers and their countries; and in yet another way it is good for careers workers - whose position is validated as worthwhile.

At its crudest, matching is like finding holes for pegs. It therefore needs lists of human characteristics and lists of job descriptions. But help along these lines is capable of some sophistication and subtlety (Dawis, 1994). There are advantages in such thinking. It readily suggest descriptions of what help is needed and how success can be assessed. Indeed, its lists can be programmed into computers which can then make the links between person and work - quickly, precisely and cheaply.

All of this would be fine, if matching were the only thing that happens in managing a career. But it is not, perhaps never was. But now, it is not the most important thing, and it is certainly not the most basic thing. We are coming to the end of what can usefully be done on a shoe string.

Firstly, reliable lists of jobs are becoming harder to assemble: working life is continuously being "re-labelled" and "re-bundled" (Warhust and Nickson, 2001). And so lists - whether of opportunities or of the qualities you offer them - are out-of-date as soon as they are assembled.

Secondly and more importantly, the way in which we now experience work means that it is not lists but stories that best help us to understand careers.

Some career-related stories are set out below. Most of the people are unknown, although one or two are quite well connected. But what is remarkable - in some cases startling - about these people is

not celebrity status, but their struggle to make sense of a life through work. Other people's stories give us each a clue to our own. There are people here that you will recognise - in that more important sense.

Feeling for career - Terence

Take, for example, Terence: an ambitious young man, the child of an immigrant family living in an English inner city. For as long as he could remember he had dreamt of becoming a lawyer; but this was not the kind of work that he and his cousins could easily expect to enter and staying at school didn't seem to be improving his chances. So he left. Here is part of journalist Nick Davies's account.

> "His whole life was hiding from crime and craziness going on around him. Maybe he was just scared of getting into trouble. Maybe it was because he still clung to the self-respect that his cousins were losing. But he was stuck. He could dream all he liked about becoming a lawyer. The reality was that he was living in a ghetto, where he was far more likely to become a pimp...
>
> "But the dream would not die.
>
> "He found the strength to take one step further away from crime, to repair the damage that had been done to him by school. He signed up to go to college to learn law.
>
> "Now he could see a future for himself. If he could become a lawyer, he could live a decent life himself but, more than that, he would have skills to bring home to his own community, just like an earlier generation had hoped to take their skills home to Jamaica.
>
> "It seemed then to Terence that Rastafarian faith was beginning to transform his community ..
>
> "Instead of distrusting each other, people were beginning to greet each other in the street, realising that they had something which gave them a direction, which did not depend on white people. Terence felt this was a turning point, not only for him but for the whole community. He began to feel hope. Maybe, after twenty years of being lost in this country, they were about to find themselves."...
>
> "Pretty soon, crack started to spread through the ghetto like infection."
>
> (Nick Davies, 1998)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This is deeper, wider and more dynamic than finding holes for pegs. Of course, it is: no good writer would portray a life without speaking of how the person feels, and the difference that feelings make to what she or he does.

Your working life calls up feelings as much as any aspect of your life. There is enjoyment or boredom, reaction to what other people do and say, and feelings about the way working life confirms and rewards, overloads and disappoints.

But feelings like these belong to a time and place. It might not be appropriate to list them on a resume, to enter them into an application form or to bring them up at an interview. And they probably cannot be punched into a computer. They are often transient.

Yet the moment can be decisive.

Feelings distil into more pervasive sentiments. There are values, which may drive a career; there are also stereotypes, which will certainly hinder it. But these more pervasive states cannot be understood independently of the feelings that first provoked them. Nonetheless, people act on values and stereotypes, having long-forgotten what first provoked that sentiment.

Terence's story moves on, and things go badly. He feels good now, but he is going to feel bad.

Careers work which cannot enable people to deal with feelings and sentiments cannot help (Kidd, 1998).

Career is other people - Joey

We enjoy work and we endure it. But much of our feeling about work is directed at other people - people who help or hinder, share or abandon, manage or mismanage, understand or misunderstand, value or reject us. It is a social thing.

As it is for Joey. Joey does pretty-well everything with - and for - his mates. When he talks about his life, the words "I" and "we" seem to be interchangeable. Here he is, telling sociologist Paul Willis what he wants.

> "We wanna live for now, wanna live while we're young, want money to go out with, wanna go with women now, wanna have cars now, and uh think about five, ten, fifteen years time when it comes, but other people, say people like the ear'oles ["ear-holes", students who pay attention to teachers], they'm getting

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> their exams, they'm working, having no social life, having no fun, and they're waiting for fifteen years time when they're people, when they've got married and things like that. I think that's the difference. We are thinking about now, and having a laff now, and they'm thinking about the future and the time that'll be best for 'em... . They're the ones that abide by the rules... . They'll be the toffs, I'll say they'll be the civil servants, toffs, and we'll be the brickies and things like that...
>
> "We're the ones that do the hard grafting, but not them, they'll be the office workers. I ain't got no ambitions... I just want to have a nice wage, that'd just see me through.
>
> "I don't say it's wise. I say it's better for us, people, the likes of us, we've tasted, we've tasted not the good life, we've tasted, you know, the special life what you'd have when you're older. I think we just like it too much, I know I do anyway. I don't think you can cut yourself off from it now and do an apprenticeship and all that ... and not have much bread "
>
> (Paul Willis, 1977)

It is not a new story; but (language aside) Paul Willis' account of peer attachment is as convincing as anything produced since.

Joey is a working class-lad in a Birmingham school. His intelligence and insight speak for itself: he knows what he is doing and what the consequences are likely to be. He's at least as bright as some of the toffs he holds in both admiration and scorn. And he could do at least as well as they. But he's got his mates and what he takes to be a good life. And those loyalties are going to make a difference to the way Joey manages his career. That is, says Paul Willis, "how working-class kids get working-class jobs".

There are, of course, differences in peer groups now. One difference is the extent to which commercial imagery has invaded the way young people present themselves and their allegiances. Getting hold of the right stuff, with the right logo, is important. Branded goods have, argues Naomi Klein, become a declaration of identity (Klein, 2000). A modern Joey, with his mates, can select logos and symbols to declare who they are - and why they feel good about themselves. It's the message that Paul Willis found, in a different imagery.

And its social world reduces our lists of abilities and opportunities to an irrelevance, then for Joey - and now for his sons and daughters.

Career and culture - Ken

While, in matching theory, a person can be seen as a more-or-less free-standing individual, Paul Willis sets his stories in the context of family and neighbourhood. Talk of how groups influence people calls up concepts of culture.

Whatever else culture does, it frames beliefs about how things work and what is important. Culture may declare what men and women do, how things came to be this way, how they change, and why they should be changed. For Joey it comes down to what is respected and what is laughable. It can be a matter of what is contemptible and what - at any cost - must be preserved.

Such sentiments vary: different allegiances give different priority to different beliefs and values. The arts, religion, the media and - as we've seen commerce - all contribute to the formation and transmission of such ideas. But it would be a mistake automatically to assume that any culture is necessarily superior to any other.

Yet some cultures better fit their people for work. Where that happens Martin Bloomer and Phil Hodkinson draw on the concept of "cultural capital", to convey the idea that some beliefs and values offer advantage in the negotiation of life chances" (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2001). When it comes to being "a toff", Joey sees himself with no such advantage. But he sees himself with an edge in other respects.

Since the beliefs and values of a culture refer to ideas about how things work, and how they may be changed, it is hardly surprising to find that culture makes a difference to the way people approach working life.

As it does for Ken. Ken's family are deeply committed to their own Ogoni people. It sets them against Shell Petroleum; Ken's father has been gaoled as a consequence of his activism. But must the son fight the father's battles? As we pick up his version of story, Ken Wiwa is a London journalist.

> "I flinch now at how cold I was. It seems obvious, especially with the benefit of hindsight, that anything, however banal, would have kept his [father's] spirits up. But I was paralysed by an awareness that if I wrote to him, I would have to answer the issue dangling like a large question mark between his hot, filthy prison cell in Port Harcourt and my comfortable misery in London: What was I going to do?
>
> "A letter arrived from Nigeria:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

'Dear Junior,
I have not heard from you in months.
Your father'...

"At last, some time later, I wrote a long letter to my father... I told him I was going to marry Olivia; I went about it in a cautious, circumspect way. I had read somewhere that Ogoni were forbidden to marry outside their race, and I somehow imagined that since he had become such an Ogoni nationalist, he would disapprove of my choosing to marry outside...

"His reply remains the most important one my father ever wrote to me. But as was my wont in those days, I zeroed in on his criticisms of me: I was ashamed that he felt I was 'lazy'. He could have said I was lacking in direction, but my father never minced his words, especially when he was trying to motivate me. It did the trick, however, because I handed in my notice at work the very next day. I decided it was time to show him what I could do."

(Ken Wiwa, 2000)

Ken seems unwilling wholly to accept his father's beliefs and values. But neither is he willing wholly to reject them. "Career management" now sounds a not entirely appropriate term for what Ken is doing. Ken is not just being effective, he is engaging in an inner struggle. From now on, we will use the term "career engagement" - because career means knowing what you will take from your upbringing - and how you will move on.

Moving on means change - new allegiances and new ways of understanding things. And working with change means we must reach beyond matching theory - which does not satisfactorily portray change.

We have lost sight of the lists.

Career over time - Isabelle

Making an account of change is background thinking that we all engage. It is a continuous process of mentally portraying how things are.

The process has been likened, by neurologist Antonio Damasio, to making "a movie in the brain" (Damasio, 1999). It begins with good and bad feelings about where I am and what is happening; feelings provoke a response, and the response develops the ability to assemble a picture of how things are and how they change. The movie is especially about how I interact with the world - both its physical and its social features. It means that I need not just see

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

myself as the product of past causes; I can also see myself as the cause of future effects. This has obvious survival value; and the greater the rate of change, the greater the value.

Novelist Isabelle Allende calls this process "seeing the connections and consequences". Her journey - traced by journalist Maya Jaggi - has been a long one. She was born, the child of a Chilean diplomat, in Lima, Peru. He suddenly and mysteriously disappeared; and she and her mother returned to Chile to live with her mothers' "grandly Catholic" family. Following her mothers' remarriage she lived in Bolivia and Lebanon. She was educated in Beirut by British Quakers, and in an English finishing school. Plenty of cultural capital there.

She returned to Chile to become a successful journalist, working for a feminist magazine Paula. By the 1960s she was driving a car, painted with giant flowers, to her own TV chat show. She married when she was 19, serving her husband, she says, "like a geisha" because "It was the way a Latin American woman served a man".

But the story also shows journalist Maya Jaggi as a freer spirit, engaging another way.

> "She chafed against not only male prerogatives ('I'd wanted to be a man since I was five') but an impervious hierarchy that was partly racial: the more Indian the blood, the lower the class. 'I'm fascinated with how you break a system, defy and challenge it. As a woman, that's determined my life' she says. 'I was brought up seeing the injustice of a class system; the poor didn't have a chance. The people who had control for generations had impunity. It was very hard to change society when I was growing up, though it happened with Salvador Allende [her cousin, the deposed former President]'...
>
> "In the first 48 hours after the coup, her 'perpetual innocence and extended adolescence' were shattered... Partly because she was an Allende and a familiar face on television, she found herself called on to help the resistance..."

Isabelle at first refused safe passage to Mexico, but eventually she was forced to flee to Venezuela: "I'd come from a country where we dress in grey and pretend we're British, to a place enjoying the oil boom, where there was an erotic charge in the streets." Maya Jaggi continues.

> "While her daughter was ill, she wrote an extended letter to her, in the diminishing hope that she would one day read it. The letter grew into her memoir,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> Letter to Paula, which she calls 'the most important book I will ever write, which has the greatest truth. Writing is exorcism. It deals with the demons of the past, sorts out the confusion. Life happens so fast there's no time to see the connections or consequences; there's too much noise everywhere. But in my work, there is no noise. Everything has a ripple effect in a book; in the years of introspection, I grow. For me, it's like meditation or prayer'...
>
> "Her writing has sought to recover a place lost not only through exile but through childhood separation from Chile as a diplomat's daughter. ''In Chile I realise I'm a foreigner, even, though I understand the codes and can speak with my own accent, and it's very sad for me to confront that,' Allende says. 'I'm a foreigner in the US too, and always will be. But my roots are more in my books now than in a place; my home will be in my writing'."
>
> (Maya Jaggi, 2000)

Once-upon-a-time, careers might have meant treading in well-worn family footsteps, but contemporary career increasingly means moving on, from scene to scene, encounter to encounter, episode to episode.

And what can be listed for one episode may not serve for another.

Yet the early-days experience of a culture is insidious. The belief survives long after the experience is forgotten. It has got inside you: its values have become your morality, its assumptions are your truth, its explanations release the springs for your action.

Yet again, culture is learned. And anything that can be learned can be re-learned. Indeed, understanding one's own culture is a step in the process of moving on. For Isabelle there were dramatic and tragic catalysts - making new "connections and the consequences".

It is plainly wrong to use lists of attributes and preferences made in youth to predict a person's future. A young woman might punch self-stereotyping descriptions into a computer, which might then list "girlie" jobs. That may please her. But it is not good careers work if she has never taken her own view of her culture and its expectations. Simple matching takes no account of that right. It may even help further to entrap her.

Good careers work enables people to learn from experience. Whether through upbringing or native wit, Isabelle learned to do this. Everyone can. A necessary part of what it means is being

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

able critically to examine other people's expectations - teachers', employers', governments', family's - the culture's. The contemporary world increasingly requires us to be flexible in this way.

Because culture is internalised, a first step in understanding the person is to understand the culture. Careers work cannot ignore the culture of the people it seeks to help, and must respect it.

But culture need not be destiny. Like Ken and Isabelle, we must move on.

Cultural capital - Karen

Isabelle's life is rich in the impressions, encounters, images, metaphors and conversations of her culture. Indeed, all of these stories have some riches in that sense.

In Karen's story, it is harder to see what she has got to go on. Like Terence and Joey, she is inner-city - born and bred. Journalist Nick Davies reports that her life had once been good: a nice house, food in the fridge and a school that everybody agreed was important. But her mum and dad got into heroin and crack cocaine. Karen is 14 when Nick Davies picks up the account, and she has not regularly been to school since she was 11.

> "Listen to Karen, sitting with her back to the lift-shaft wall, listless, aimless, hopeless...
>
> "Her dad used to take her out thieving. She used to knock on the door... and if there was someone in, she would ask for a glass of water and run along; if not, her dad would smash a window and they would get inside and take whatever they could. She got arrested for that eventually, when she was 11, and spent 36 hours in a cell. By that time she had lost sight of normal life. She says there was no food in the house, and to feed her sisters as well herself she would go and borrow money off friends or eat at someone else's house or steal things from shops or scavenge in rubbish bins. They had no light or heat in the house. Her mum and dad just did drugs and watched time go by.
>
> "She became the stand-in mother, feeding and caring for the three younger ones. At first, when she stopped going to school, she still took the others, but then it got too much and so they all stopped. From time to time the welfare officer used to come round and bang on the door. And Karen says her mum told them to keep quiet and then the welfare officer would go away. If there were letters about it, they just ignored them. Eventually her dad got sent to jail - four years for robbery - and her mum

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> was left on her own with four children and a heroin habit. And that's the way it still is now.
>
> (Nick Davies, 2000)

So why, asks Nick Davies, does Karen not want to go to school? Because, he says, she can see no point: she is scared to be caught failing, and determined to advertise her indifference; she is angry, cynical... and emotionally damaged.

And don't miss this: Karen has already started work - she is, as best she can, making a home.

But there is another important sense in which she has embarked on her career. It is because what she is now learning will form the basis for her future actions. If the way she sees things does not change, her actions will not change. Karen's present "connections and consequences" are not going to help her.

Yet, learning from experience is not going to be easy for Karen. It is not that she lacks wits: nothing in her story suggests she is stupid; on the contrary, she manages the situation as well as any 14 year-old could. A new beginning is going to be hard because of how little appreciation she can have of what else might be possible: as Nick Davies observes, she has "lost sight of normal life". She may - like Joey - think of herself as more street-wise than other kids; but, in order to move on, she would also need - like him - to appreciate how she could pursue other possibilities. Joey didn't pursue them, but he knew he might. But, with her back to the lift-shaft wall, what other possibilities can Karen see?

Much of what we believe we are learning we make to fit with what we already think we know. Change of mind is often uncomfortable. The processes of working out how things work is begun in the toddler years; and new learning - change of mind - needs a lot of encouragement and support (Law, 1981). Where is Karen going to get that?

Not from the conventional apparatus of careers work, described at the beginning of this article. It cannot reach deeply or widely enough to help her. And, anyway, she has stopped going to school.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Points of view on a career move - Sukhdev

Paul Willis portrays Joey in a social context, but he also allows us to get close - what Joey thinks he knows and what he believes he can do about it.

And he has a great deal to say about how other people disagree with him: his mates, other students, teachers, his mum and his dad. Joey can give you a pretty good run down on what they all think - he even appreciates their point of view. But he also knows that he sees things in his own way. Without the realisation that other people see it differently, one's own view can feel like God's own truth. Joey knows better than that - and takes his own responsibility for what he says and does.

Sukhdev's now finds he must take responsibility for his life. A university teacher, he tells his own story. His older sister has had a big influence on him . She came to England as a Punjabi-speaking child in the late 60s. The school that she was sent to seemed unable to help her. She failed pretty-well all her exams. Their parents thought she should leave and get a job they happen to have heard about. After three months of being "bossed around" she resigned and went to college for a second shot at her exams. Against everybody's hopes and expectations she is now a graduate in health administration.

In her twenties her parents tried to arrange a marriage for her. Sukhdev was appalled: "she was being asked to terminate her ambition and her drive. She was being told to give up her self".

But now, ten years on, and of marriageable age, Sukhdev finds he can see his parents' point of view.

> "... I have begun to appreciate how their adherence to tradition, stability and continuity has succoured them through dark and harried times. I now see that to reject an arranged marriage is not to reject abstract values such as one's Asianness. [It is] to blank out those times when my parents were stoned by kids on their way to pick up their children from primary school, when factory foremen denied them overtime, when phantom callers yelled murderous obscenities down the telephone line.
>
> "In the act of denying to my parents the one thing they have looked forward to for nearly 39 years I must freeze my heart. I know that my mother will be blamed by my father if I fail to get married soon. When her heart is broken, I will have been responsible. Parents can't change, their ways. I can. I must."
>
> (Sukhdev Sandhu, 2000)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This decision, says Sukhdev - in a nice turn of phrase - "is smaller and more important" than Asianness. It is small enough to change Sukhdev's life, to shape his career, and the career of anyone who shares his life.

No career move is ever made in a social vacuum. It always draws on - and challenges - allegiances. In a society experiencing any degree of diversity and change you would have to keep your head in a sack not to find alternative points of view. That is one of the reasons why career engagement is increasingly a matter of both holding on and letting go. For Sukhdev - and for many others - it is a painful process.

There seems to be little point in going on mentioning matching theory. But, if there is a message here it is, "distrust lists; tell your story!".

Some people like lists because they have the advantage of clarity: you can tick the "pros" and cross the "cons" - decision made! Stories are more ambiguous: changing scenes, unfolding events, new people, different points of view - conflict and confusion!

The inner life of career - Premanand

But stories also have themes.

Take, for example, Premanand who, according to journalist Beatrice Newby, is the senior figure in India's International Brotherhood of Magicians - and its youngest at heart. While other members of the group are entertainers, Premanand is a missionary - pulling the magic carpet from under religion. Beatrice Newby quotes him.

> "'My mission began when I found that I had been deceived by godmen, I was a great believer, you see, and from a young age I really wanted to know God. I went everywhere looking for God, from Hindu temples to Buddhist monasteries. I followed many gurus and practised all the 300 yoga sidas.'"

Her account shows that Premanand's upbringing is not culturally poor.

> "'From a young age, our theosophist parents encouraged us to be outspoken...'. His parents took the unorthodox view that all religions were the same. When it was time to enrol Premanand at the local school, they refused to fill in his religion or caste on the application form. It was the start of a rebellious school career, at the end of which Premanand was thrown out for joining the student movement for independence. When a teacher came

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

to his house asking Premanand's father to beg for a pardon, he refused on the grounds that his son had done nothing wrong.

"Instead, from the age of 12, Premanand was given an imaginative schooling at home. His father had a laboratory in the garden shed which he used for concocting products for his various soap and ink manufacturing businesses. "'One day, I broke my father's thermometer, so I hid it on an aluminium plate under my bed. When my father found out, he ordered me to wash the plate vigorously. But, when I did, a frothy grey substance appeared.' Later on, Premanand was to find that this is how Sai Baba produces "vibhuti", or holy ash from the photographs of himself..."

Premanand found a mission to educate India's rising generations. The account continues.

"We spot some children buying drinks from a roadside stall, and Premanand insists on jumping out for a quick demonstration. Within minutes, he is ushered into the schoolyard by teachers wishing to know his business, and invited to perform. The children jostle to see, as Premanand begins producing holy ash.

"Suddenly there is a heated argument among the teachers, and Premanand is asked to leave. As we drive off, the children run after the car, trying to get a last glimpse of the bearded man. "'I will come back this time next week,' he shouts from the window, 'I will be outside the gates.' Speeding off, he turns: 'You see, every minute of my life is an adventure. How can I stop?'."

(Beatrice Newby, 2000)

Beatrice Newby - self-confessed fan - reports that Premanand has been to almost every village in India, has made 7000 speeches, written 36 books, travelled to 27 countries and trained thousands of young "magicians". He is head of the Indian Rationalists' Society, and president of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. He publishes the magazine Indian Skeptic and replies to letters every day. "People write asking how such-and-such a miracle is done," he says. "I must write back and explain." Increasingly, these letters are from children complaining that their parents follow godmen and asking advice on how to dissuade them. Premanand believes this shows the success of a recent drive to educate the young. "Adults are so stuck in their superstitious ways, that when I expose one godman, they turn to another," he says. "Children are different." "All his efforts have", says Beatrice Newby, "but one goal: to arm the public against fakes and frauds".

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

You might call Premanand a driven man: he knows what he wants and creates all kinds of ways of pursuing it. Put it another way: he has found meaning for his life - a life theme.

A theme gives narrative its point. The psychologist Abraham Maslow (1970) has suggested a spectrum of values that do this. He argues that they can be culture free. It is true that Premanand finds his theme in upbringing; but Isabelle's life-long feeling for liberation may have come from something else.

You can find variations on each of Abraham Maslow's analysis in the stories told here. For Karen it is a struggle for (1) material well-being. Terence is concerned for the (2) safety of his people. Joey is (3) attached to his friends and wants their (4) respect. Ken wants his father's respect, but he is also learning to manage his father's (5) influence. Premanand is dedicated to the (6) discovery. Some part of Isabelle's life can also be understood in terms of her pursuit of (7) a clear and aesthetic elegance. Sukdhev is concerned that his sister and he are free to pursue their own (8) self realisation. Such values can become deeply embedded in a person's life - they become life themes. Unsurprisingly, they correlate with career decision making (Law & others, shortly).

In careers work, life themes must be recognised on the basis of what confused, and perhaps troubled people disclose. They are recognisable in the stories that Joey tells and the events Isabelle pays attention to.

And, for all we can yet know, they are also in Karen's recurring dreams, in Sukhdev's favourite stories and in Ken's indelible memories. They are often so recognisable and persistent that, when people do something we recognise, we might remark "how very like Terence!" and "that is so Premanand!". Themes link episode to episode - life long.

Where a theme is not clear it can, with help, be sought; but, argues Mark Savickas, there is always a theme, and finding it is an important clue to enabling career engagement (Savickas, 1997).

It is, then, how careers work can help people make their own stories mean something.

Abraham Maslow's list of values culminates in what he calls "self-actualisation". He does not mention "self-transcendence"; yet, to read these stories is to be aware that work is not only done for "me", it is done for other people. Think of Karen.

Career as Purpose - Deborah

Journalist Judith Mackrell portrays Deborah MacMillan's work as for her husband. Deborah grew up in Australia, believing that her brothers would get to be lawyers or doctors but that she must make a good marriage. Her talent was for art; and she ran wild in 1960s art college - enough to get cut off from the family. For a time she drifted with a crowd of theatrical drag queens. By 1971 she was in London temping as a waitress. A friend introduced her to Kenneth MacMillan: working-class Scot, insecure, angry young man, and recently-appointed Director of The Royal Ballet. Deborah tells of his "amazingly touching, old fashioned courtship". She accepted.

She found that the Opera House board did not support Kenneth. "They were" she says, "terrified of being associated with failure". Judith Mackrell quotes Deborah.

> "'Kenneth was skinless in a way that I think truly creative people have to be. He had this wonderful, watchful quality, and he was very tuned in to other people. He was the first man I'd ever met who I completely trusted. But he was also funny and incredibly generous. I came to the relationship with nothing, but from the moment we were together there was never any question of anything not being ours'...
>
> "The writer Colin Thubron got to know the MacMillans during the 80s and says they were ideally complementary. 'Kenneth felt uncomfortable in the rather grand world he moved in and Deborah was everything to him. She was very beautiful, very charming, very intelligent, and though she was a rebel, she was very good at navigating the social world'...
>
> "Yet if MacMillan was obsessional about his work, he wasn't secretive. He always sought his wife's opinion and she always gave it straight. 'I wasn't snowed by how lovely it all was, I was quite beady,' she says. 'And even if my judgements were way off the mark, Kenneth valued having an outside eye'..."

Kenneth was knighted in 1983, which, says Deborah, enchanted her parents. "I was, of course, seen to be back on the rails". But, in 1992 and during a first night, he suffered a second heart attack, and died.

> "Thubron says he witnessed her anguish with a kind of awe. 'Deborah had always been the strong one in the relationship but suddenly she seemed ravaged.'..."

Now, continues Judith Mackrell, Deborah paints and exhibits her work, entertains her small circle off friends, returning to Australia

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

every few years. She is said still to find it hard to get intimate with the English.

> "She has been appointed to the Arts Council, where fellow member Thelma Holt remembers her as 'very larky, a breath of fresh air. I don't know how she slipped through the net. She had that very Aussie forthrightness and she was very passionate in her defence of dance. She wasn't rude but she didn't value diplomacy at the expense of truth. There were a lot of people around who had agendas that weren't always apparent. Deborah came with no baggage. She's very staunch. I would quite like to be in a trench with Deborah. She'd never knife you in the back, but if she did have to put the knife in she'd do it properly.'..."

Deborah has not let go of her commitment to her husband's work. Awhile after his death she found herself in dispute about cuts she wanted to make, and which had been authorised by both the composer Benjamin Britten and the choreographer - her late husband.

> "One small passage was a sticking point and in frustration she announced that she was 'getting spirit messages from Kenneth. He says he's very happy with the cuts and so is Britten, excepted that he'd like all the music to be played on a synthesiser.'
>
> "She grins. 'I didn't train with drag queens for nothing'."
>
> (Judith Mackrell, 2001)

Like the others, Deborah owes much to her early life. But there is more than what she has internalised from upbringing and learned from the people she worked with as a younger woman. Meeting Kenneth seemed to conjure something that had, until then, been hidden. She admits to knowing next-to-nothing of his work. Yet she has dedicated much of her life to it.

Antonio Damasio (1999) develops his movie-in-the-brain theory to account for such dedication. Being able to develop the movie, he argues, enables us to imagine a life beyond concerns for personal comfort and survival. Because that is so, it seems, we can postpone present comfort for future rewards - rewards that we cannot see but which we can work out are achievable. And so, we can act on the basis of what we have not yet experienced - we can imagine. And we can do that to the point where we are prepared, not only to postpone comfort and survival, but to disregard it - even to risk it. People will then pursue a truth greater than they have yet known, a beauty more sublime, and a goodness deeper than the achievement of their own well-being. That would be work.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

According to psychology-professor Steven Pinker (1997), because such aspirations do nothing to enhance survivability our genes do not protect them. But, he argues, the pursuit of such purposes is genetically enabled. In order to survive and flourish we need to act purposefully, to imagine further possibilities, and to deal in trust. And so genes that support such activity survive. And, because we can do these things, we can also construct and develop ideals. And so, the mental equipment which enables us to conceive and pursue action is a gift of nature; but how we use human nature to pursue aspirations and ideals? - that is entirely our responsibility.

As a species we learn for action. Nature has not equipped us to satisfy idle curiosity, pass exams, write-and-perform hit singles or invent religions. That is what we want. The most basic motivations are for what we need: knowing what to do to survive, escape, thrive and flourish.

Career learning is learning for action - Sarkom's daughters

And that is what engagement in career is: working out what is going on, how it is changing, what can be done about it and what you are going to do. It is the situation of these farmer's daughters, on this vulnerable farm. This is part of journalist John Pilger's account.

> "I drove into the Krawang region of Java, where I met a rice farmer called Sarkom. It is fair to describe Sarkom as a representative of the 80% of humanity whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. He is not among the poorest; he lives with his wife and three daughters in a small bamboo-walled house and there are tiles on the floor. At the front, under the eaves, is a bamboo bed, a chair and a table where his wife, Cucuk, supplements their income with sewing...
>
> "The International Monetary Fund offered the post-Suharto government a 'rescue package' of multi-million-dollar loans. The conditions included the elimination of tariffs on staple foods. 'Trade in all qualities of rice has been opened to general importers and exporters', decreed the IMF's letter of intent. Fertilisers and pesticides also lost their 70% subsidy. This means that farmers such as Sarkom, are likely to go bankrupt and their children forced to find work in the cities...
>
> "Jakarta is ringed by vast compounds, known as economic processing zones. These enclose hundreds of factories, making products for foreign companies: the clothes you buy on the high street, from cool khakis of Gap and Nike, Adidas and Reebok trainers that sell in the UK for up to £100 a pair. In these factories

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> are thousands of mostly young women working for the equivalent of 72 pence per day... about half the living wage...
>
> "'I went to prison for 14 years so that this would not happen', said Sarkom. 'All my friends, those who were not killed, went to prison so that the power of big money would not take over. I don't care what they call it now - global this or that - it's the same force, the same threat to our lives'."
>
> (John Pilger, 2001)

Is this a no-choice situation? Can these young women get a living from that land; for how long - and would it be worth their while? Closer to Jakarta they can maintain some kind of working life, but at what cost? Part of their cultural capital is the appreciation of their father's early life as a political activist. Could that make a difference to what they do? Should it?

I don't know, and neither do you. There may be little that any careers work can do to help. But, at the very least it can do this: it can help people to see what possibilities for sustainable action there are and why they would take one action rather than another.

For one or more of Sarkom's daughters that might be the farm, Nike or politics. Terence and Joey have other choices. Sukhdev and Isabelle chose against the grain. Deborah chose love; for Karen it could be crime.

The power of complexity

Ideas of work are changing. Indeed seeing the links between what I do as a worker and what I do as a partner, a householder, a parent, a consumer, a volunteer and a citizen - these are increasingly important concerns. People will, of course calculatively match skills to rewards. But, in doing that, they will shape their relationship with their society's tax-welfare-and-debt system. And there is more than that. Work is in response to, with and for other people. Work aligns you with systems for creating personal and community wealth. It impacts the built and natural environment. It weaves the community and social fabric - and, sometimes, it unravels it. So career engagement makes all kinds of direct and indirect difference not only to your own life but to the life of other people - family and community, people you have never met and many more you will never meet.

Work also impacts a worker's beliefs, politics, life chances, health and longevity. It locates a person in society. It is entwined with that person's sense of identity. Decisions about work, change in work, loss of work, are not just change in income they are change

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in everything. There is as much breadth, depth and dynamic in how a person engages his or her working life as there is in any aspect of the human condition.

Career, then, may not be what any traditional culture says it is. Nor is it necessarily what employers, academics and politicos claim. It is what people do. Contemporary thinking is increasingly interested in the way in which people interpret it (Collin & Young, 2001). And such thinking is increasingly at a distance from "official" versions (Law and others, shortly).

It is not difficult to find people whose stories illustrate the new thinking. You probably know some. And almost any of these stories can be used to illustrate almost any aspect of contemporary career; because feelings, attachments, culture, meaning and purposes flow into each other. And so, to find any current in this cross-flow is to wonder where the others might be. The resulting account is always subtle... layered... changing.

To acknowledge the reality of such dynamics is not wholly to reject matching theory; but it is to set that theory in a deeper and wider context. It is also to doubt that matching is the only or the best thing to do. And it is to realise that it is certainly not the first thing to do.

Where things can be kept simple, they should be. Some officials will like the way in which the simplicity of pegs-and-holes thinking is easier to promote, to implement and to hold to account. And, for people whose feelings are under control, whose acquaintances are helpful and who are awash with cultural capital there may seem little point in opening up deeper questions.

And, anyway, complexity is not worth defending unless it helps us to act more effectively. But we do need that deeper understanding of what is going on in the lives of people like Joey and Karen. And it does provide us with more ways of getting to grips with what is happening - and what might be done to help. There is power in complexity.

You see an implication in all of this: conceiving career development wholly in matching terms - identifying and developing skills, disseminating information, eliciting plans for immediate action - most helps people who least need help.

After all, once the available people have been matched, there is no practical value in looking further. In the all-important service sector, when recruiters have found the people whose upbringing

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

has helped them to "look good and sound right", they close their lists - even if that means leaving jobs vacant (Warhurst & Nickson, 2001). All of this excludes Karen and Joey from fair access; because - however able, entertaining and motivated they may be - the "aesthetic labour market" will not favour them. They might even seem to endanger a carefully-constructed corporate image. Both they - and their lost employers - are losing more than either will ever know.

Avoiding that loss requires a commitment to fairness. It has to be acknowledged that the British proposals for the Connexions service sees the need to target deeper and more exploratory help on "the excluded". But there are already concerns that the majority will suffer, if resources are concentrated on the most needy (Watts, 2001). The programme is not yet fully on stream; we don't really know what it will be able to do, and for whom.

But trying to balance universal against targeted help may miss the real point. In any society undergoing rapid change, it is less-and-less likely that traditional cultures can underpin career engagement. In Britain the problems are already greater than we know. And, though Isabelle, Sudkhev, Ken and Deborah are reasonably well placed career-wise, there are deep issues for the terms in which their career engagement is worked out.

Whether in these or in other ways, the "look-good-sound-right" majority also need more than pegs-and-holes help. Does anybody imagine that the currents and vortices that run in the lives of the excluded do not run in the lives of the less troublesome majority? And, as world-wide change accelerates, those needs will deepen. We are unfairly excluding more people from realising their real-career potential than we yet know about (Law, 2001].

The power of complexity now gives us the means to understand how that might be so, and what can be done to help.

The authority of "the small and important"

Real careers are in close-up. It is true that career is being transformed by massive commercial, technological and political forces. But the experience is what Sukhdev characterises as 'smaller scale and more important'. Career engagement is a biographical process. Globalisation may provide a location shot for your movie; the action is in families, villages, neighbourhoods (Law, 2000).

It may not be in the interests of an alliance between commerce, policy and academia to focus local, personal and variable realities.

Indeed, research may distort our understanding of what is really happening, by concentrating attention on what hegemony says is important (Philo & Miller, 2001). In careers work officially mandated research asks whether policy initiatives are being effective, whether employability is being achieved, whether government-set targets are being met and whether economic or social gains are being realised.

And there are tensions between these aims and concerns for real careers (Law and others, shortly). We should not now forget what we have known for a long time: helpers can inadvertently damage the people they are trying to help, when they fail sensitively to engage close-up experience (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

The implication is this: among the many things we need to do is local research for action; so that we know what to do, alongside people, in their communities. Careers workers are trained - or should be trained - for such enquiry. But they cannot do it without the help and knowledge of local stakeholders: the people they seek to help, their families, and their communities, their cultures and their feelings. It is this authority that must be enabled. Across America there is a parent-led resistance to over testing children at school (Guttenplan, 2001). Sarkom's daughters teach us a similar vigilance concerning who-is-trapped-into-doing-what - in all our societies.

The outfits which most comprehensively seek bases for action independently of government, commerce and academia have been non-governmental. These NGOs have varied origins, there are many different kinds, and they all continually change. But the idea of a 'Greenpeace' or an 'Amnesty' for careers work is not in-the-least far-fetched. Jeremy Rifkin, at the end of a detailed analysis of change in contemporary economy, concludes that we must think of work as what whole people do in real communities (Rifkin, 2000). He urges the enablement of this "third sector" - counterpoising politics and commerce.

Five continents, nine stories - any of them could have been set anywhere. We are all cosmopolitans now.

You might argue that the stories are untypical, because the people are extraordinary. But, to maintain that case, you would need to argue that ordinary people cannot be as passionate as Terence, as loyal as Joey, as reflective as Ken, as alert as Isabelle, as desperate as Karen, as determined as Premanand, as conflicted as Sudkhev, or as threatened as Sarkom's daughters.

Would you?

Publications

Martin **Bloomer** & Phil **Hodkinson** (2001). 'Learning career and cultural capital'. Paper delivered to a NICEC research seminar on 10th May 2001.

Audrey **Collin** and Richard **Young**, Richard (2000). The Future of Careers. London: Praeger.

Antonio **Damasio** (1999). The Feeling of What Happens – Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness. London, Heinemann.

Nick **Davies** (1998). Dark Heart - The Shocking Truth About Hidden Britain. London: Vintage 1998

Nick **Davies** (2000). 'The Tower bock children for whom school has no point'. London: The Guardian, 10th July, also see (2000) The School Report - Why Britain's Schools are Failing. London: Vintage,

René **Dawis** (1994). 'The theory of work adjustment as convergent theory'. In Mark L Savickas & Robert Lent (eds.): Convergence in Career Development Theories. Pal Alto, Ca: Consulting Psychologists Press Books.

DD **Guttenplan** (2001). 'Testing our children to destruction'. London: The Guardian, 4th July, 2001, page 5.

Maya **Jaggi** (2000). 'A view from the bridge'. London: Guardian Saturday Review, 5th February, 2000 pages 6-7.

Jennifer M **Kidd** (1998). 'Emotion: An Absent Presence in Careers Theory'. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 52, pp. 275-288.

Naomi **Klein (2000)**. No Logo. London: Harper Collins

Bill **Law** (2000). 'Learning for work: global causes, national standards and human relevance'. In Audrey Collin & Richard Young: The Future of Career. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bill **Law** (2001). 'Connexions - mutant not monster'. Careers Guidance Today, July-August.

Bill **Law** (1981). 'Community interaction: a "mid-range" focus for theories of career development in young adults'. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 9 (2)

Bill **Law**, Frans Meijers and Gerard Wijers (shortly). British Journal of Guidance and Counselling (shortly to be published).

Judith **Mackrell** (2001). 'Keeper of the flame'. London: Guardian Saturday Review, 11th August, 2001. pp. 8-9.

Abraham **Maslow** (1970). Motivation and Personality (second edition). London: Harper and Row.

Beatrice **Newby** (2000). 'Miracles don't happen'. London: The Independent on Sunday, 24th December, 2000, pages 4-8

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Greg **Philo** and David **Miller** (eds.) (2001). Market Killing - What the Free Market Does and What Social Scientists Can Do About It. London: Longman.

John **Pilger** (2001). 'Spoils of a massacre'. London: The Guardian Weekend, July 14th 2001, pages 18-29 & <www.johnpilger.com>.

Steven **Pinker** (1997). How the Mind Works. London: Penguin.

Jeremy **Rifkin** (2000). The Age of Access - The New Culture of Hyper-capitalism Where All of Life is Paid-for Experience. New York: Jeremy P Tarcher/Putnam

Sukhdev **Sandhu** (2000). 'Must I marry a girl I hardly know?' London: The Independent, September 27th, 200, p.17.

Mark **Savickas**, (1997) 'Constructivist Career Counseling' Advances in Personal Construct Psychology (4) pp. 149-182.

Charles **Truax** & Robert **Carkhuff** (1967). Towards Effective Counseling and Psychotherapy - Training and Practice. Chicago: Aldine.

Chris **Warhurst** and Dennis **Nickson** (2001). Looking Good and Sounding Right. London: The Industrial Society

A G **Watts** (2001). 'Careers guidance and social exclusion - as cautionary tale'. British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 29 (2).

Paul **Willis** Learning to Labour – How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs. Farnborough, Saxon House, 1977, pages 97-98

Ken **Wiwa** (2000). 'A Difficult Martyr' London: The Guardian Weekend, October 28th, 2000. pages 11-20; see also Ken Wiwa (2000). The Shadow of a Saint. London: Doubleday.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

www.hihohiho.com

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: HOW DO CAREERS REALLY WORK?	
Author(s): BILL LAW	
Corporate Source: THE CAREER LEARNING CAFÉ - www.hihohiho.com	Publication Date: ~~2002~~ 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please

Signature: William Law	Printed Name/Position/Title: BILL LAW / EDUCATION CONSULTANT / DR
Organization/Address: 2 BROOK ST ELSWORTH CAMBRIDGE UK CB3 8HX	Telephone: +44 1954 267619 FAX: +44 1954 267619
	E-Mail Address: bill@hihohiho.com Date: 23/5/03

Over